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2002HANOI02079 - CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	CPR-02
	DINT-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	ED-01
	FBIE-00	VC-00	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01
	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	SSC-01	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00
	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/013W		
				-----DD0445	230927Z	/38	

FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7375
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HANOI 002079

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL 08/22/2012
TAGS: PHUM PINS PGOV SOCI VM DPOL
SUBJECT: BITTER AFTERLIFE OF GENERAL TRAN DO'S FUNERAL

REF: HANOI 1787

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY POL/C SCOTT BELLARD; REASON 1.5(D)
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2. (C) IN TWO SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS ON AUGUST 20 AND 21, THREE OF HANOI'S LEADING DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS TOLD POLOFF THAT THEY VIEW GENERAL TRAN DO'S AUGUST 14 FUNERAL AS AN "HISTORIC POLITICAL EVENT" HIGHLIGHTING THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP'S DISTANCE FROM THE PEOPLE. DESPITE A NEAR-TOTAL LACK OF ADVANCE PUBLICITY, BETWEEN ONE AND TWO THOUSAND PEOPLE ATTENDED THE FUNERAL, ACCORDING TO DR. NGUYEN THANH GIANG. THEY INCLUDED MANY "REGULAR PEOPLE AND VETERANS" AND "OLD PARTY MEMBERS," SAID ACTIVIST AND AUTHOR HOANG TIEN ON AUGUST 20.

3. (C) PHAM QUE DUONG, DR. GIANG, AND TIEN (PLEASE PROTECT) WERE ALL DISMISSIVE OF THE HIGHEST-RANKING OFFICIAL REPRESENTATIVE AT THE FUNERAL, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AND CPV CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER VU MAO. THEY COMPLAINED THAT IT WAS "INSULTING" THAT A POLITBURO MEMBER HAD NOT BEEN PRESENT. TIEN NOTED THAT SENTIMENT IN THE CROWD AGAINST THE GVN'S AND CPV'S HANDLING OF THE FUNERAL WAS REMARKABLY WIDESPREAD. DR. GIANG DESCRIBED HOW EVEN SOME OF "THE OLD PARTY MEMBERS" AT THE FUNERAL HAD BEGUN BEHAVING AS IF THEY WERE AT A DEMONSTRATION, PUMPING THEIR FISTS IN THE AIR IN APPARENT ANGER AT THE CPV'S AND GVN'S "SHABBY TREATMENT" OF GENERAL DO. IT SHOWED A LACK OF RESPECT TOWARD A MAN MANY REGARDED AS A NATIONAL HERO, GOING AGAINST VIETNAMESE CULTURE AND TRADITION, GIANG AND TIEN SEPARATELY NOTED.

4. (C) TIEN HAS WRITTEN A SHARPLY CRITICAL TRACT ABOUT THE FUNERAL ENTITLED "THE SOUND OF CLAPPING AT A FUNERAL" (SEPTEL WILL PROVIDE TRANSLATION). HE AND FELLOW ACTIVISTS
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PHAM QUE DUONG AND VAN KHAC KHIN ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DISTRIBUTING COPIES TO TOP GVN AND CPV OFFICIALS AS WELL AS TO OTHER ACTIVISTS.

5. (C) ACCORDING TO DUONG, THERE WERE POLICE BARRICADES AROUND THE FUNERAL HALL. HE EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT ANY FOREIGNERS, MUCH LESS A US EMBASSY OFFICIAL, WOULD HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO ATTEND, ALTHOUGH HE SAID THAT HE SAW A FEW FOREIGN JOURNALISTS OUTSIDE THE BARRICADES.

6. (C) DR. GIANG DISCUSSED THE FUNERAL WITH POLOFF IN THE PRESENCE OF ANOTHER MAN WHOM HE SIMPLY CALLED "ONG" (A PRONOUN OF RESPECT) KHANH. KHANH CLAIMED TO BE A "REVOLUTIONARY" AND CPV MEMBER BEGINNING IN 1944 AS WELL AS AN ASSISTANT TO THEN-POLITBURO MEMBER TRAN XUAN BACH. (NOTE: BACH WAS ELECTED TO THE POLITBURO AT THE SIXTH PARTY CONGRESS IN 1986. END NOTE.) DR. GIANG SAID THAT THE POLICE "DID NOT DARE" TO DO ANYTHING TO ELDERLY CPV

MEMBERS SUCH AS KHANH BECAUSE OF THEIR STATURE, AND CLAIMED THAT KHANH REPRESENTED AN OLDER GENERATION OF CPV MEMBERS THAT QUIETLY AGREES WITH THE DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS. DR. GIANG REMARKED THAT VIETNAMESE YOUTH DO NOT PAY MUCH ATTENTION EITHER TO THE CPV OR TO DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS, BUT OPINED THAT THEY "LIKED" THE DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS MORE.

17. (U) THERE WAS LIMITED BUT RESPECTFUL COVERAGE IN MAJOR VIETNAMESE NEWSPAPERS ABOUT TRAN DO'S DEATH (BUT NOT ABOUT HIS FUNERAL, AS FAR AS WE CAN ASCERTAIN), WHILE OMITTING ANY DISCUSSION ABOUT HIS FALL-OUT WITH AND EVENTUAL EXPULSION FROM THE PARTY IN HIS LATER YEARS.

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18. (C) COMMENT: EMBASSY AGREES WITH THE ASSESSMENT OF THESE ACTIVISTS THAT THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO BE ALONE WITHIN ELITE CIRCLES IN RESENTING THE TREATMENT OF GENERAL TRAN DO BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER HIS DEATH. WE NONETHELESS DO NOT EXPECT ANY STRONG GVN RESPONSE -- APART FROM A POSSIBLE NEW ROUND OF QUESTIONING AND/OR HEIGHTENED PETTY HARASSMENT -- AGAINST THEM EVEN AFTER THE DISTRIBUTION OF TIEN'S TRACT. CPV AND GVN SENSITIVITIES ABOUT TRAN DO'S UNIQUE STATURE AND HISTORY, AS WELL AS SOME POSSIBLE TACIT SYMPATHIES WITHIN THE CPV TOWARD DO'S CRITICISMS, LIKELY WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO ARRIVE AT A SENIOR-LEVEL CONSENSUS ON ANY LARGER CAMPAIGN OF RETALIATION OR ANY NEW CRACKDOWN AGAINST DEMOCRACY ACTIVISTS.
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